

REPORT

OF THE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE,

OF THE

TOWN OF HAMILTON,

FOR THE

YEAR ENDING MARCH, 1860.

READ AND ACCEPTED IN TOWN MEETING, MARCH 13, 1860.



SALEM :

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REPORT.

THE close of the municipal year devolves upon the School Committee the duty of making a report of the history and condition of the schools, which we now present :

At the last annual meeting the town made an appropriation of but five hundred dollars, for the support of schools, which with \$29 11, the town's proportion of the income of the Massachusetts school fund, constituted the entire means of sustaining four schools, summer and winter, furnishing fuel and building fires ; thus if the results of the year were to correspond to the means of producing them, you could not expect great progress to be made in the education of our youth.

The town also gave the power of choosing Prudential Committees to the several districts, and to the committees thus chosen authority to select and contract with teachers ; under these votes the committee of course could not adopt for the conduct of the schools any general plan, as in the year previous, but left the length of schools, the time of beginning and closing the same, the sex and wages of the teachers, to be determined in each district by the action of its committee ; however by an enactment of the legislature, to take effect in July, 1859, the duty of selecting and contracting with teachers was imposed, exclusively, upon the town's committee. The Prudential Committees selected all the teachers of the summer school, and as we were more desirous to gratify the wishes of the town, as expressed by their vote, than to seize eagerly the authority conferred on us by the statute, we extended to the Prudential Committees the privilege of nominating teachers for the winter in the same way as they had done for the summer schools. Of this privilege they did not indeed avail themselves to the fullest extent, but in all cases, with one exception, the teachers were selected, we believe, after consultation with and by the consent of the Prudential Committees,

so that the choice of the districts, expressed through the agents of their own election, has been regarded in the selection of teachers. The statistics of the several schools are as follows :

EAST DISTRICT. Nathaniel B. Butler, Prudential Committee. *Summer Term*. Miss Lois Whittier of Newburyport, teacher. Whole number of scholars 16. Average attendance 13. Length of school three months. Total wages of teacher \$33.

Miss Whittier was young and inexperienced, but as she advanced in her work she grew in capacity for usefulness. She was faithful and conscientious in the discharge of duty, and gained steadily in the essentials of a good teacher. We feel satisfied that she was a laborer worthy of her hire, and that her little charge were helped along over the rugged path of learning at quite the usual speed.

The *Winter Term* opened with Mr. Nathaniel B. Butler, teacher, known and esteemed by us as a gentleman of large experience in this department of usefulness. After remaining in the school three weeks, Mr. Butler, for reasons well understood by the district and himself, but not of sufficient general interest to the town and the friends of education to be set forth in this report, placed his resignation in the hands of the committee, which was accepted. The wages received by Mr. Butler were \$22 50. The whole number of scholars during his term of instruction was 26.

One week after the resignation of Mr. Butler, Mr. Zeno A. Appleton was employed by the committee and took charge of the school. At the outset Mr. Appleton displayed that earnest enthusiasm in the business, which is the best guaranty of success. No efforts on his part were wanting, we believe, to make the brief period of his instruction confer marked and permanent benefit upon his pupils. The closing examination showed that he had met deserved success. There was visible and essential progress in all the branches of study. There was the appearance of an orderly and industrious school, under the charge of a faithful teacher. The writing books received the especial approbation of the committee and other friends present. The whole number of pupils present was 27; average attendance 23 69-86; number over 15 years of age 5. Length of term 8 weeks. Wages received by teacher \$62 50.

SOUTH SCHOOL. James E. Woodman, Prudential Committee. Miss M. A. Richards, of Wenham, teacher during the year. Length of *Summer School* 2½ months, whole number of scholars 43. Average

attendance 34 5-11. Length of *Winter Term* $3\frac{1}{4}$ months. Whole number of scholars 46 ; average attendance 34. Number over 15 years of age 12. Wages of teacher for both terms \$112 50.

Your committee congratulate the district on having received the services of a teacher possessing experience and tact in the affairs of the school room. The management of the school during the year has been such, that that degree of discipline and order which is a necessary condition of progress in study, has been secured. All has moved on in peace and tranquility, and this fact is creditable not only to the teacher, but also to the older and more influential pupils, whose behavior within and without the school room has *generally* been deserving of praise. There has been a large number of classes, and a wider range of study than in some of the other schools. Algebra and history have been attended to, and in all the committee have seen evidence of skill and labor put forth by the teacher, and of appreciative effort from the scholar.

The examination of the pupils who were present at the final visit of the committee, was highly creditable, but a large number of the older members of the school were absent, most of them without explanation, and we presume without excuse, indeed there is no doubt that the absence of some was occasioned by the presence of the committee. This ought not so to be. The older scholars should make it a point to be present with minds and persons in the best condition on examination day. They should do this not only from a sense of duty, but also from a feeling of respect to the teacher, and a desire to give their own school a high position compared with others. But if children shrink from such attendance parents should enforce it.

WEST DISTRICT. George B. Dodge, Prudential Committee, *Summer Term*, Miss Huldah A. Webber of Beverly, teacher. Length of term 7 weeks. Wages received by teacher \$25. Whole number of pupils 27 ; average attendance 23.

Miss Webber was well educated ; her attainments fitting her to teach with ease all branches at whatever stage of advancement that would be called for in any of our schools. Her examination before the committee was of the most satisfactory character. Here was her first effort at teaching in a public school. The members of the committee who visited her school regarded her experience as a decided success, believing that they saw in her rather more than average aptitude for teaching, and energy and enthusiasm in her business. We believe that there is no good reason why the district should not be satisfied with their summer school, and we suppose that they are.

Winter Term. Mr. N. N. Withington, teacher. Length of school 3 months. Wages per month \$30. Whole number of scholars 36. Average attendance $30\frac{1}{2}$.

Mr. Withington has gained the good will and esteem of his pupils and their parents, and the winter term has been regarded as very successful; this we expected from his former extensive experience as a teacher, and from the interest he has taken in the youth of the district. The attendance, behavior and general appearance at the final examination was satisfactory. The committee regretted that the scholars had not taken hold of writing with more zeal, and are unable to understand why it was so much neglected.

NORTH DISTRICT. John Tibbets, Prudential Committee. *Summer Term.* Miss L. E. Soule of Lewiston Falls, Maine, teacher. Whole number of scholars 34; average attendance 27 12-49. Wages of teacher \$50.

Miss Soule's recent and successful trial as a teacher of this school during the last year, and the careful estimate of her professional character and success given in the last report, renders it unnecessary to discuss her merits here; and we have only to say that we regard her services to the children in this district as of great value.

Winter Term. Miss Huldah A. Webber, teacher. Whole number of pupils 42. Average attendance 28 11-36.

Miss Webber had so finished an education and had seemed to possess so much of the faculty of teaching, and was so successful in her summer school, that the committee were led to believe that notwithstanding her youth and inexperience she could carry the school through the winter. The event disappointed our expectations. The school after going on six weeks stopped, stopped like a piece of badly adjusted machinery, because the several elements necessary for its successful operation could not or did not work harmoniously together.

We do not so fully understand the relative influence and importance of the causes that led to this unfortunate result, as to render a fuller discussion of the matter profitable. We do not however, infer from this result a conclusion unfavorable to Miss Webber's reputation as a teacher, or her future success, nor that this school will not be found by other teachers a pleasant and satisfactory field of labor. The immediate occasion of the cessation of the school was, as you are aware, an injury to the house which rendered it untenable until repaired. After the repairs had been made, we determined, considering the lateness of the

season and the unsettled state of the school, that the unexpended balance of the school money could be more advantageously used with the appropriation of next year, and we recommend that the town pass any vote that may be necessary for its being so used.

It is much to the credit, and it has been much to the benefit of three of the districts, that private schools have been sustained by them during the season. Miss Soule taught ten weeks in the North District, Miss Richards eight weeks in the South District, and Miss Webber six weeks in the West District. These schools were sustained by contributions of the inhabitants, and were opened to all who wished to attend. The services of Mr. Withington have also been secured to keep a private school for a month, in the West District, which is now in operation.

Having thus given some particular statement in regard to the condition of each school, we come to the consideration of their general condition, requirements and prospects. Are they accomplishing about what we may reasonably expect? Can the town, the committee, or the parents, do anything which shall essentially improve their character and raise the standard of education within the necessarily economical appropriation which this town can make for the support of schools. We cannot of course place our institutions of learning on a level with those in the larger and wealthier towns in our county and state, we cannot, so scattered is our population, effect a gradation of our schools, which is desirable when it can be done. We must do whatever is done in the common district schools, by teaching the elementary branches in a thorough and faithful manner, by endeavoring to make our youth good readers, legible penmen, correct spellers, sufficiently thorough in arithmetic for the ordinary business of life, to give them a general idea of geography and grammar, and then let them go, sufficiently learned to be men and women, respectable in intellectual culture, or if they would soar higher or dig deeper, to seek assistance outside of Hamilton.

Aiming at this moderate but respectable position, it would seem that it ought to be fully and fairly attained, and that thus much might be assured to every child, who with common abilities does his share in the work; for every child, or rather his parent in his behalf, has a duty to perform as well as the town in its municipal capacity, the committee and the teacher. The first is the duty of prompt and regular attend-

ance at school. This has been so often adverted to in the reports of the committees, that it seems superfluous to speak of it here; but still it is strangely neglected. The parent who places his son at a private school or academy at great expense, would be naturally and justly dissatisfied to hear that he visited the school room when it suited his convenience, and forsook it when he found anything more agreeable to his tastes, and would severely censure the gross neglect of those to whom he had entrusted the control and education of his son. And why should parents be less attentive to the true interests of their children than they would require strangers to be? Besides this regular and prompt attendance, every parent and guardian should require of his child implicit obedience to the rules of the school, whether they seem judicious or otherwise to the subject of them. Those who are in a state of pupilage are not much disposed to give their entire approbation to the rules which control them, especially if they draw hard; and it is not quite worth the while, until the children are at least as wise as their parents, to give them a voice in the management of a school, or to discuss with them or in their presence the merits and demerits of a teacher. In case of a good ground of complaint against the instructor, parents should make a suitable representation to the committee, and then if the evil is too great to be borne, and the committee neglect their duty, it is the part of wisdom to remove a child from school entirely until a change is effected.

There has been more than one instance we fear, even in this town, within the past few years of the usefulness of a teacher being impaired or wholly destroyed by careless gossip or uncharitable criticism, more especially when uttered in the presence of the very children who were to obey the teacher commented upon.

During a few years past, there has been a tendency in this state to substitute female for male teachers in our public schools, thus securing it has been supposed, longer terms of equally valuable service. Indeed the testimony of some of the friends of education has been, that generally females are better adapted to instruct than males. And the school committees of this town feeling that our schools were not as long as the wants of the rising generation demanded, have desired to give the experiment a trial here, and from time to time a few years back, females have been employed in some of the winter schools with good success. The public sentiment in town has been halting and uncertain in the matter, and last year the committee attempted to give the experiment a thorough test by the employment of female teachers in all the

schools, selecting them in the first instance with great care from the Normal School itself. The opinion of the committee, as far as they were able to form a decided one upon the success of the experiment, was given in the last report. But your committee of this year, upon a fuller consideration of the matter, and in the light of further observation and experiment, are unanimously and decidedly of the opinion, that however it may be elsewhere, it is better for us to return to the old paths, to employ female teachers in the summer and male teachers in the winter. We are of this opinion because we believe that our winter schools are in such a state of discipline, that a female teacher finds the mere business of keeping order, to demand so much of her time and efforts that the necessary attention will not be given to teaching, or if absorbed in instruction, her school drifts into disorder. The deficiency in schools taught by females has been in discipline and order; and in some instances they have been compelled to appeal for assistance from without by summoning in the committee to vindicate and sustain their authority. This ought not so to be, and a system which involves the necessity of frequent aid from the committee beyond mere advice and suggestion, does not exactly meet our wants. Besides this we fear that some of our older youth, who greatly need a winter's schooling, and are themselves conscious of their need, have absented themselves rather than submit to female government. It may not be reasonable that large boys should prefer to obey the master's rule, rather than yield to the milder sway of the mistress; but if the presence of a female teacher in the winter drives boys from the school room, when they most need its benefits, it is a consideration not wholly to be overlooked; we would remove every stumbling block from the path of any youth who wishes to ascend still higher the hill of learning. If we do not misjudge the public sentiment of our town, we believe it to coincide with the opinion which we have expressed as our own, on this question; and if we are not mistaken upon this point, this consideration ought to have great weight in deciding the matter. No system of management of our schools can succeed, which is greatly adverse to the general sentiment of our citizens.

We must remind you however, that if this system of employing male teachers in our winter exclusively is to be restored a more liberal appropriation than that of last year will be required, otherwise it will be impossible to meet even the moderate requirements of the laws of the Commonwealth.

The usefulness of our schools would be much increased by greater

permanence in the relation of instructor; our schools suffer by a constant change of teachers; it is desirable, if a *good* teacher is secured, that he be employed if possible for a series of years; the schools suffer by a constant change in the mode and requirements of discipline and of the manner and habits of teaching.

DAN'L E. SAFFORD,	}	<i>School Committee.</i>
D. S. ALLEN,		
WM. A. BROWN,		

Hamilton, March 13th, 1860.